20

5

10

- 1. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment comprising: selecting the instant messaging environment from a set of stored instant messaging environments;
- transmitting an instant messaging environment identifier corresponding to the selected instant messaging environment from a transmitting instant messaging application to a receiving instant messenger application;

receiving the instant messaging environment identifier at the receiving instant messenger application;

retrieving the stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

activating the instant messaging environment in the receiving instant messaging application.

- 2. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 further including determining whether the transmitting instant messaging application is an eligible instant messaging application.
- 3. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 further including determining whether the selected instant messaging environment corresponding to the transmitted instant messaging environment identifier is stored on the receiving instant messaging application.
- 4. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 further including determining whether the selected instant messaging environment corresponding to the transmitted instant messaging environment identifier has expired.
- 5. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim
  1 further including downloading the selected instant messaging environment from a source that stores the instant messaging environment.
  - 6. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment identifier is transmitted with an instant message.

15

20

- 7. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment specifies a background for a history window.
- 8. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim
  1 wherein the instant messaging environment specifies an animation for a history window.
  - 9. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment specifies functions that execute when certain words are included in a message.
  - 10. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment specifies functions that execute when certain combinations of words are included in a message.
  - 11. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment specifies functions that execute when certain emoticons are included in a message.
  - 12. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment includes a link.
  - 13. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment includes a watermark.
  - 14. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment redefines user interface commands.
  - 15. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 further including tracking whenever an instant messaging environment identifier is sent.
- 16. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim
   1 further including tracking when a certain function contained in an instant messaging environment is executed.
  - 17. A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application comprising:

receiving the user interface command; and

10

15

20

25

processing the user interface command in a manner specified by a predetermined instant messaging environment.

- 18. A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application as recited in claim 17 wherein processing the user interface command in a manner specified by a predetermined instant messaging environment includes accessing a version of the user interface command that is redefined by the instant messaging environment.
- 19. A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application as recited in claim 17 wherein processing the user interface command in a manner specified by a predetermined instant messaging environment includes executing instructions specified by the instant messaging environment and then executing the user interface command.
- 20. A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application as recited in claim 17 wherein the user interface command appends text to a history window and wherein the predetermined instant messaging environment changes the manner in which the text appears in the history window.
- 21. A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application as recited in claim 17 wherein the user interface command is processed by a browser window.
- 22. A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application as recited in claim 17 wherein the user interface command is processed by a browser window.
- 23. A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application as recited in claim 22 wherein the user interface command is contained in hidden frame.
- 24. A computer program product for sharing an instant messaging environment, the computer program product being embodied in a computer readable medium and comprising computer instructions for:

selecting the instant messaging environment from a set of stored instant messaging environments;

10

15

20

transmitting an instant messaging environment identifier corresponding to the selected instant messaging environment from a transmitting instant messaging application to a receiving instant messenger application;

receiving the instant messaging environment identifier at the receiving instant messenger application;

retrieving the stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

activating the instant messaging environment in the receiving instant messaging application.

25. A system for sharing an instant messaging environment comprising: a first instant messaging application configured to:

select the instant messaging environment from a set of stored instant messaging environments; and

transmit an instant messaging environment identifier corresponding to the selected instant messaging environment; and a second instant messaging application configured to:

receive the instant messaging environment identifier at the receiving instant messenger application; and

retrieve the stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier;

activate the instant messaging environment in the receiving instant messaging application.

- 26. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment comprising: selecting the instant messaging environment from a set of stored instant
- 25 messaging environments; and

transmitting an instant messaging environment identifier corresponding to the selected instant messaging environment from a transmitting instant messaging application to a receiving instant messaging application wherein the receiving instant messaging application is configured to:

10

15

20

25

receive the instant messaging environment identifier at the receiving instant messenger application;

retrieve the stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

activate the instant messaging environment in the receiving instant messaging application.

27. A computer program product for sharing an instant messaging environment, the computer program product being embodied in a computer readable medium and comprising computer instructions for:

selecting the instant messaging environment from a set of stored instant messaging environments; and

transmitting an instant messaging environment identifier corresponding to the selected instant messaging environment from a transmitting instant messaging application to a receiving instant messaging application wherein the receiving instant messaging application is configured to:

receive the instant messaging environment identifier at the receiving instant messenger application;

retrieve the stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

activate the instant messaging environment in the receiving instant messaging application.

28. A system for sharing an instant messaging environment comprising:
a memory configured to store a set of instant messaging environments;
a processor configured to select the instant messaging environment from the set of stored instant messaging environments; and

an interface configured to transmit an instant messaging environment identifier corresponding to the selected instant messaging environment.

29. A method of implementing an instant messaging environment comprising: receiving an instant messaging environment identifier at a receiving instant messenger application;

10

15

20

retrieving a stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

activating the instant messaging environment.

30. A computer program product for implementing an instant messaging environment, the computer program product being embodied in a computer readable medium and comprising computer instructions for:

retrieving a stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

activating the instant messaging environment.

31. A system for implementing an instant messaging environment comprising: an interface configured to receive an instant messaging environment identifier at a receiving instant messenger application;

a memory configured to retrieve a stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

a processor configured to activate the instant messaging environment.

32. A computer program product for processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application, the computer program product being embodied in a computer readable medium and comprising computer instructions for:

receiving the user interface command; and

processing the user interface command in a manner specified by a predetermined instant messaging environment.

33. A system for processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application comprising:

an interface configured to receive the user interface command; and a processor configured to process the user interface command in a manner specified by a predetermined instant messaging environment.

25